

STATE ADMINISTRATION

Exhibit No. 4
Date 1/19/69
Bill No. SB 196

January 19, 2009

RE: **Senate Bill 196** - a bill to establish a State holiday to celebrate American Indian Heritage

I am opposed to the creation this State holiday for the following reasons.

First, other than the State general election day, the currently observed State holidays are all Federal holidays as well. People doing business with the State can reasonably anticipate State offices to be closed on those days.

Secondly, to recognize the contribution of one ethnic group and not all groups who were...and are...involved in building Montana does a disservice to everyone.

While it is important to recognize ethnic heritage, to celebrate it, and keep its traditions alive, it is not necessary to declare a State holiday to do so. The Irish were important to the mining industry, but St. Patrick's Day is not a State holiday. Many residents have ties to Canada, but Boxing Day is not a State holiday. Asians, particularly the Chinese, were instrumental in building the railroad across the hi-line, but the Chinese New Year is not a State holiday. Other groups brought farming, ranching, education, and manufacturing to the State, but there is no State holiday to recognize their contributions.

You may argue that those examples are of people from other countries. But, at least some of the Indian tribes in Montana have been granted "sovereign nation" status by the Federal government. And on some reservations in Montana, the State has no jurisdiction to enforce its duly passed laws to which other Montanans are subject, or to collect some taxes and fees that other Montanans pay.

Though I respect the American Indians' role in Montana, I oppose a State holiday for a group that does not fully participate in the rights and responsibilities of being a State citizen.

Last, and probably most important, what is the cost to the taxpayers for giving hundreds of State workers another day off? In past sessions, there has been a fiscal impact noted on proposed legislation, but I did not see such a notation on this bill. Has anyone researched this cost? In these tight economic times, we have to be fiscally responsible.

As you consider this bill, ask yourself two questions.

- 1) Does this bill benefit **all** Montanans?
- 2) Do we **really** need this?

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

Cindy Swank
Cindy Swank